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ABSTRACT

This study examined how parental advice-giving directly and indirectly influences children's quality of friendship with peers. Participating were 66 third graders, their classroom teachers, 66 mothers and 57 fathers, and 66 friends. All but one dyad of the target children and friend were the same gender. Teachers rated target children on peer acceptance, prosocial and disruptive behavior, verbal/physical aggression, and shy/withdrawn behavior. Parents separately read to their children four vignettes reflecting themes of ambiguous intent, group entry, relational aggression, and goal coordination. They were asked to talk about story events, discuss possible actions, and advise their child on the best thing to do next. Target children and their friends participated in free and structured play, a discussion, and a semi-competitive game. They were orally administered a questionnaire about their perception of the friendship. Findings showed that parents appear to provide nurturing and constructive advice regarding social behaviors more for remedial than enhancing purposes. Results indicated that: (1) parents provided higher quality advice when children were experiencing friendship and peer group difficulties than when they were not experiencing social difficulties; (2) children's appraisal of friendship was associated with children's observed friendship behaviors; and (3) children's cognitive appraisal score of a conflictual and betraying friendship had a mediating effect on children's observed friendship behaviors for fathers' advice-giving style and content. Both fathers and mothers gave more positive interpretations of peer interaction outcomes when their child's friendships were less prosocial and perceived as conflictual and betraying. Parents showed less encouragement and less warmth when children's friendships were quite positive and fulfilling. (Several figures present findings. Contains 12 references.) (KDFB)

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The Influence of Parental Advice Giving On Children's Friendship

Mary L. Flyr, Sandra D. Simpkins, Christine L. Strand, Margaret N. Wild

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Friendships in middle childhood are an important but neglected aspect of social development. The six to twelve year old child begins to expand his/her social relationships to reflect a growing importance of peers in addition to family members. It is through friendship that individuals learn about themselves and others. From friends we create impressions of our attractiveness, competence, and worthiness. The unique dyadic nature of friendship enables social skills to develop within a private and secure context. We know that friends contribute toward each other's self-esteem. The interaction between companions presents opportunities for the transmission of social norms and knowledge, which is crucial, since middle childhood is time that anxiety develops over peer relationships. Unlike the group-level construct of peer acceptance, friendship which is inherently dyadic allows two individuals to perceive and respond to each other as unique and irreplaceable.

Although our understanding of both peer relationships as indexed by group acceptance and by friendship is increasing, there is still only limited data concerning the familial correlates of these two different aspects of peer relationships. The pathways of familial effect on the child's peer competence have been identified as "direct" and "indirect". A direct or intentional pathway is when parents consciously engage in controlling and enhancing children's skills and relationships with peers by providing specific guidance, information, or advice. Indirect or non-intentional pathways refer to general family life-style with particular disciplinary or parenting style. Parenting style refers to how parents interact with their children, irrespective of content. Recently, research has examined the impact of both indirect and direct forms of parental influence on children's competence with peers. For example, a sensitive inclusion of the child in decision making (parenting style) along with explicit verbal information (content of advice giving and coaching) are associated with quality child-peer interactions.

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The overall purpose of this study was to examine the linkage between parental advice giving as directly and indirectly influencing children's quality of friendship with peers (Figure 1). Specifically, the following goals were addressed:

- examine the impact of the stylistic quality of parental advice giving and the content of parental advice giving of both mothers and fathers on children's friendships and their social peer group acceptance.
- examine the quality of children's dyadic friendships (the manner in which children interact verbally and non-verbally provides the opportunity to judge the quality of the dyadic relationship and to elucidate what each peer contributes to the relationship).
- the characteristics of friendship in middle childhood were explored to determine if the quality of observed friendships vary as a function of the child's appraisal of the quality of their friendship.
- assess children's cognitive appraisal of friendship and determine whether the cognitive appraisal serves as a mediator of direct and indirect parental influence on the observed quality of children's friendship in middle childhood.

This study was conducted within the context of a multi-study, longitudinal project examining the impact of the family on the development of social competence with peers. The longitudinal project began in 1990. Data for this study are drawn from Wave 4 (1993 and 1994) of the longitudinal project when the children were in the third grade. The target children numbered 34 boys and 32 girls who ranged in age from 7 years 11 months to 10 years 1 month. A total of 66 mothers and 57 fathers of the target children participated, as well as 66 friends of the target children. The mean age of the friends was 8 years 7 months. 46% of the peers were classified as "best friends" by target children, 44% as "close friends", 9% as "just-a-friend", none are identified as acquaintances, and one peer remained unclassified. All dyads of target children and their friend were the same gender, with the exception of one boy-girl dyad.

Classroom teachers of the target children completed a 5-point rating scale of how characteristic or uncharacteristic each classroom child was in regard to being liked or disliked by peers, prosocial, disruptive, verbally and physically aggressive, and shy/withdrawn.

Two visits to the campus project center were scheduled; the Family Visit where both parents and target child participated, and the Peer Visit where the target child and his or her chosen friend engaged in interactive tasks. Planned segments of each visit were video-taped for coding purposes.

For the Parental Advice Giving Component of the Family Visit, fathers and then mothers read to their children 4 vignette booklets that reflected themes of ambiguous intent, group entry, relational aggression, and goal coordination. Parents were asked to talk about what happened in the story situations, discuss things that could be done in each situation, and advise their son or daughter on the best thing to do next.

For the Peer Visit, the target child and friend were brought into the playroom and participated in 4 activities each lasting approximately 7 to 10 minutes: free-play, a game of tossing a plastic egg, a discussion to plan a birthday party, and a semi-competitive board game. The four video-taped segments were used to code friendship quality.

The target children outside the playroom at a private table were orally administered a questionnaire concerning the perception of their friendship.

Two measures adapted from Pettit and Mize (1993) were developed to assess the qualities of style and content. *The Friendship Quality Questionnaire* was designed with a particular conceptual orientation toward friendship quality with a goal of arriving at the child's portrayal of his or her relationship (Parker & Asher, 1989, 1992). To assess the observed quality of friendship, two measures were designed by Flyr, Howe, and Parke (1995). The first instrument assesses the individual characteristics of the target child and peer. The purpose of the second measure is to determine the dyadic or transactional characteristics of the two children together.

The findings of this study show that parents appear to provide nurturing and constructive advice regarding social behaviors more for remedial than enhancing purposes.

- The associations of observed friendship behavior, social group outcomes, and appraisals of friendship with the quality of parental advice was in the opposite direction than hypothesized. Parents appeared to provide higher quality advice when children were experiencing friendship and peer group difficulties than when they were not experiencing social difficulties.
- Children's appraisal of friendship was associated with children's observed friendship behaviors (Figure 2). Relationships followed the positive socialization literature, with positive appraisals of friendship linking to positive observed friendship behaviors. When boys and girls were examined separately, all relationships except betrayal dropped out of the model.
- Results indicated that the cognitive appraisal score of a conflictual and betraying friendship had a mediating effect on children's observed friendship behaviors for a father's advice giving style and content (Figure 13). Fathers and mothers were found to provide their daughters and sons with more positive interpretations of peer interaction outcomes (advice content) when daughter-peer and son-peer friendships were less prosocial (observed acting negatively) and perceived as conflictual and betraying. Likewise, with their daughters and sons, when friendships were quite positive and fulfilling (observed acting positively), fathers and mothers engaged in less encouragement and positive responses as well as with less warmth (advice style).

This study clearly demonstrates the child's contribution in a reciprocal parent-child interactive system.

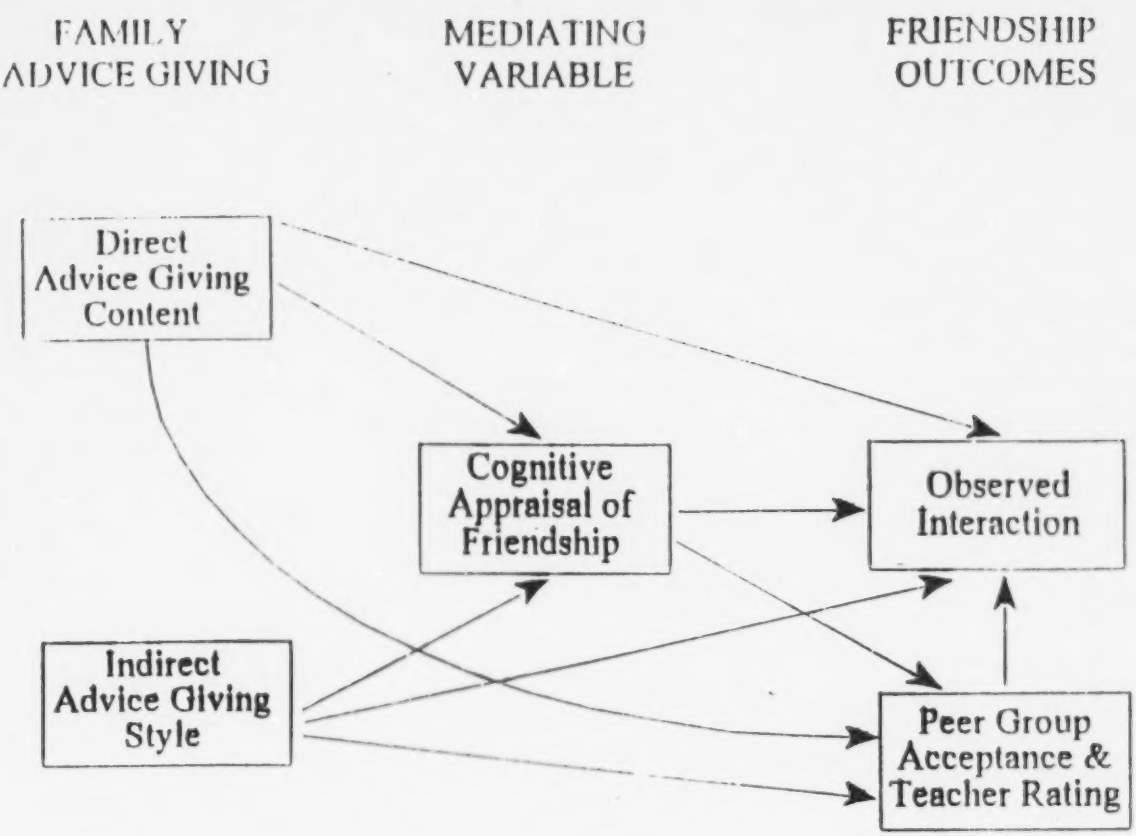

Figure 1 Model of Family Influence on Children's Friendship

Table 1
Four Factor Solution for the Observed Friendship Behaviors

	Structure Coefficient
Factor 1: Acting Negatively (**actneg**)	
Individual Item 4	
directs negative behavior	.75
Individual Item 5	
responds negatively	.84
Individual Item 9	
angry coercion	.79
Individual Item 12	
negative affect	.78
Dyad Item 3	
conflict & disagreement	.80
Dyad Item 6	
competition	.79
Factor 2: Acting Positively (**actpos**)	
Individual Item 1	
involved & interested	.89
Individual Item 2	
initiates proactive behavior	.63
Individual Item 3	
responds positively	.74
Individual Item 11	
positive affect	.49
Dyad Item 1	
related to one another	.81
Dyad Item 2	
lack of interruptions & invasion of space	.75
Factor 3: Information Sharing (**Infoshar**)	
Individual Item 15	
cognitive sophistication	.76
Dyad Item 4	
sophisticated play organization	.74
Dyad Item 8	
discuss personal information	.43
Factor 4: Dominance (**dominc**)	
Individual Item 6	
controlling	.49
Individual Item 7	
following	.73
Dyad Item 6	
competition	.31

Table 2
Eigenvalues and Interfactor Correlations of Observed Friendship Behaviors

	F1	F2	F3	F4
F1				
F2	.35			
F3	.03	-.46		
F4	.08	-.05	.14	
Eigenvalues	3.41	2.36	1.08	1.06

Figure 3. Relationship of Father Advice Giving Style & Content to Child Observed Friendship Behavior & Cognitive Appraisal of Friendship.

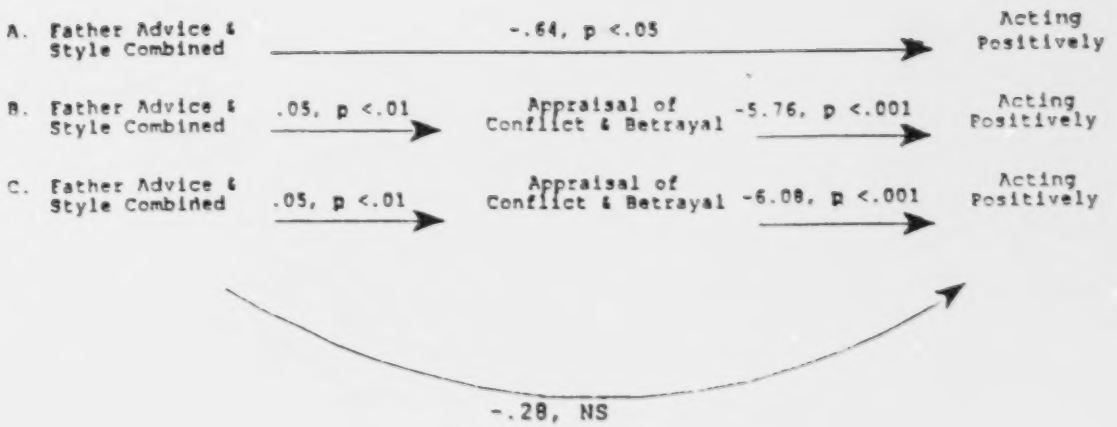

Figure 4. Determining Cognitive Appraisal as Mediator of Father Advice

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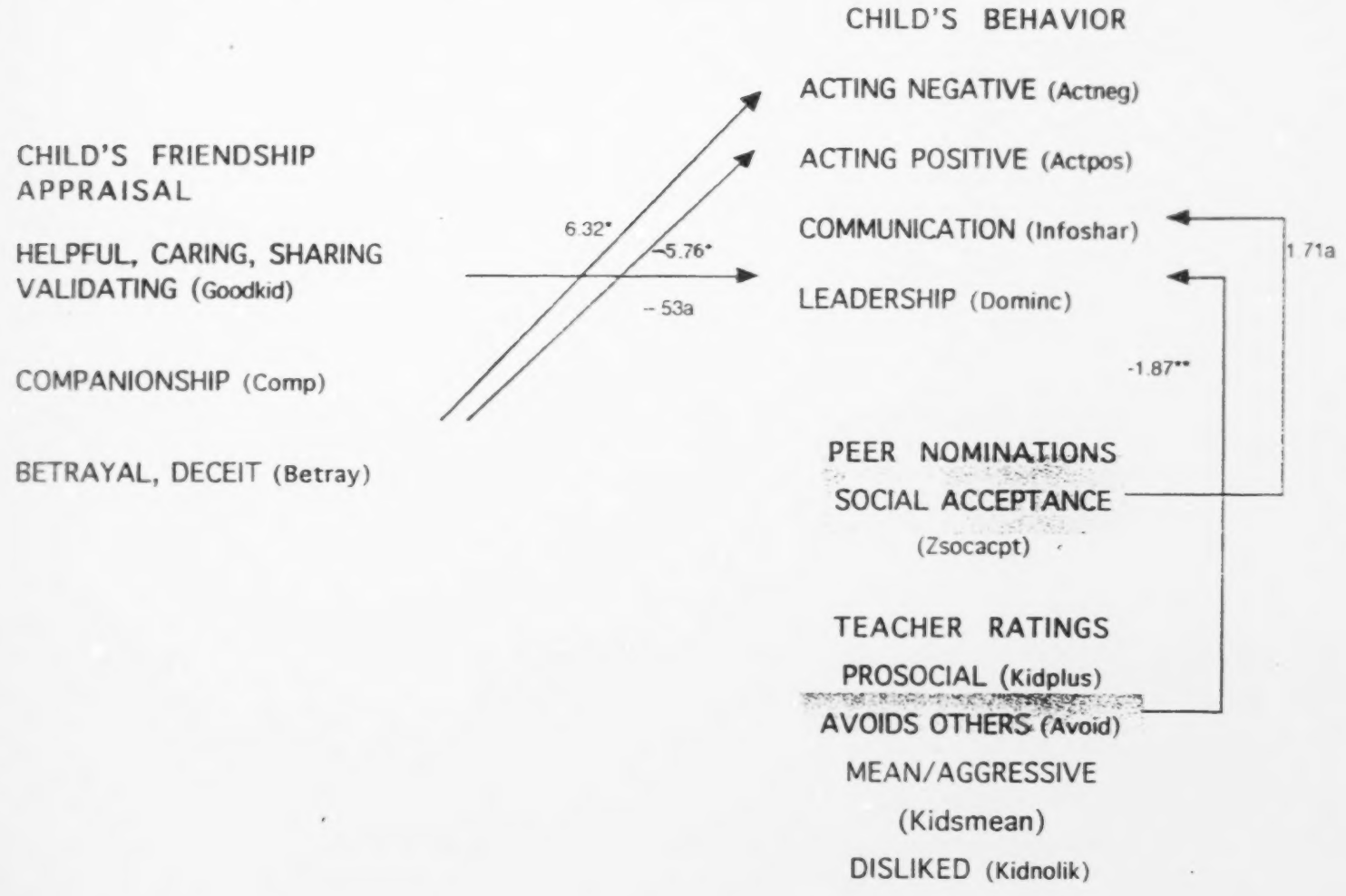
FRIENDSHIP AND PEER GROUP ACCEPTANCE



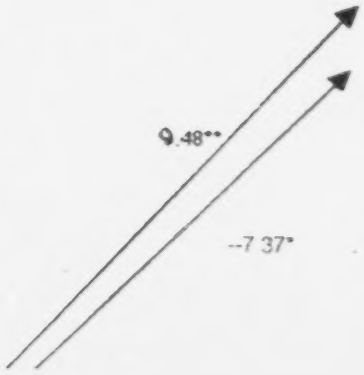
GIRL'S FRIENDSHIP AND PEER GROUP ACCEPTANCE

CHILD'S FRIENDSHIP APPRAISAL

HELPFUL, CARING, SHARING VALIDATING (Goodkid)

COMPANIONSHIP (Comp)

BETRAYAL, DECEIT (Betray)



CHILD'S BEHAVIOR

ACTING NEGATIVE (Actneg)

ACTING POSITIVE (Actpos)

COMMUNICATION (Infoshar)

LEADERSHIP (Dominc)

PEER NOMINATIONS

SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE (Zsocacpt)

TEACHER RATINGS

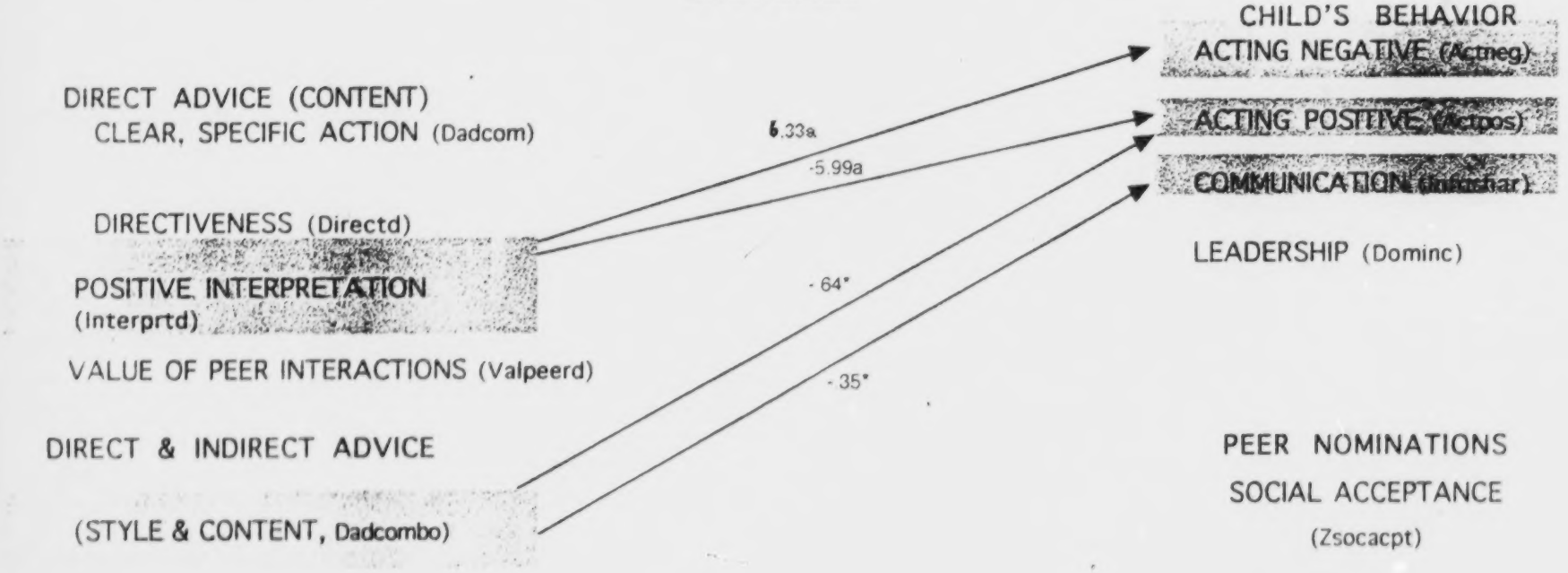
PROSOCIAL (Kidplus)

MEAN/AGGRESIVE (Kidsmean)

AVOIDS OTHERS (Avoid)

DISLIKED (Kidnolik)

PATERNAL ADVICE-GIVING: INFLUENCES ON CHILDREN'S FRIENDSHIP OUTCOMES



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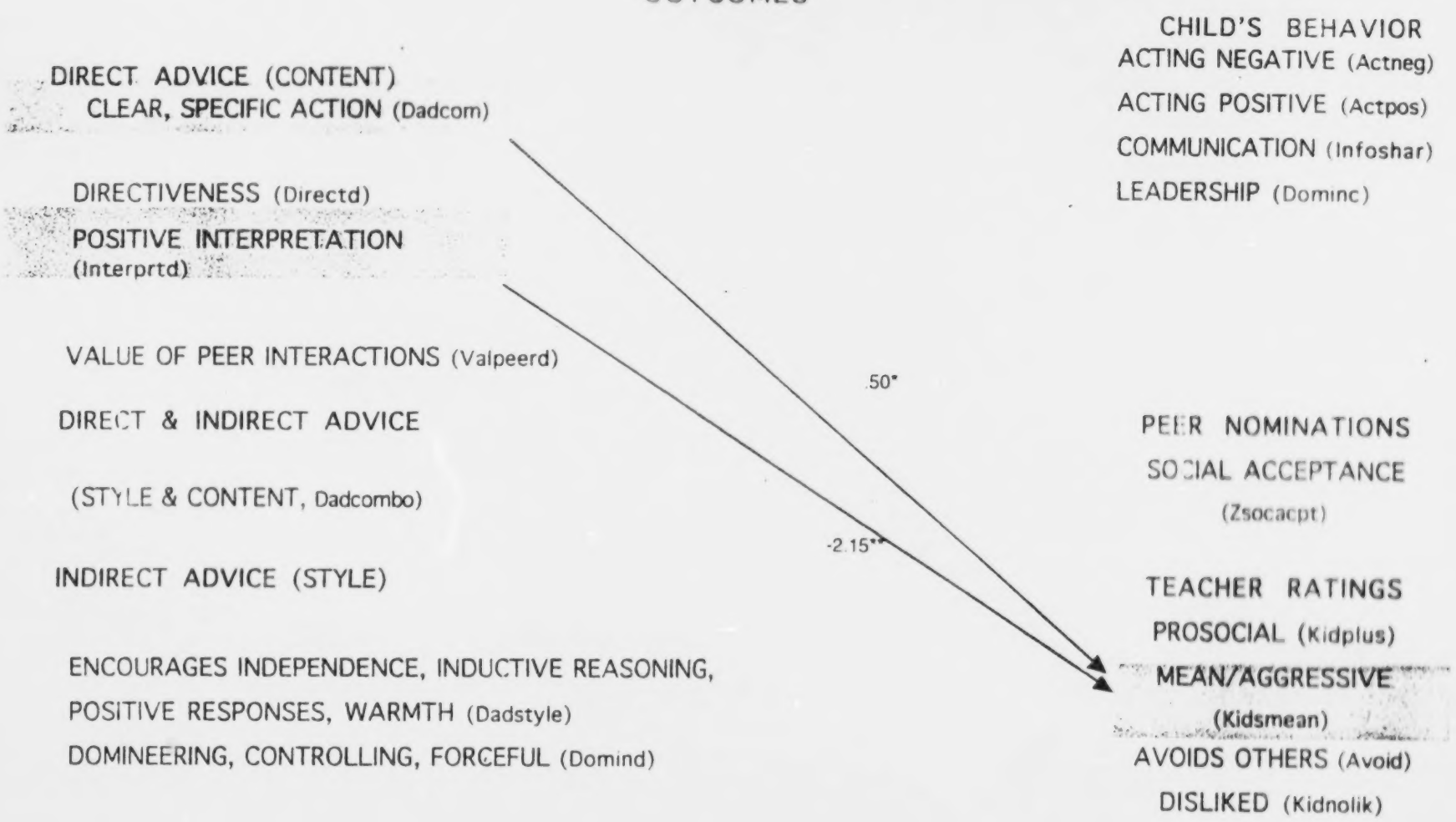

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-ATERNAL ADVICE-GIVING: INFLUENCES ON CHILDREN'S FRIENDSH. OUTCOMES

DIRECT ADVICE (CONTENT)
CLEAR, SPECIFIC ACTION (Dadcom)

DIRECTIVENESS (Directd)

POSITIVE INTERPRETATION (Interprtd)

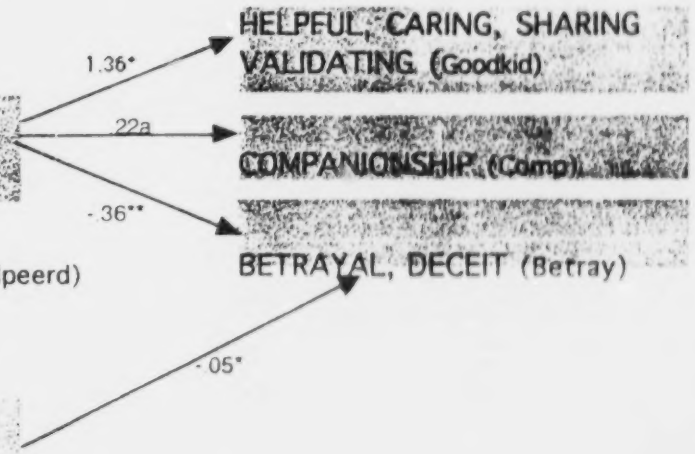
VALUE OF PEER INTERACTIONS(Valpeerd)

DIRECT & INDIRECT ADVICE

(STYLE & CONTENT, Dadcombo)

INDIRECT ADVICE (STYLE)

ENCOURAGES INDEPENDENCE, INDUCTIVE REASONING,
POSTIVE RESPONSES, WARMTH (Dadstyle)
DOMINEERING, CONTROLLING, FORCEFUL (Domind)



CHILD'S FRIENDSHIP APPRAISAL

HELPFUL, CARING, SHARING
VALIDATING (Goodkid)

COMPANIONSHIP (Comp)

BETRAYAL, DECEIT (Betray)

CHILD'S BEHAVIOR

ACTING NEGATIVE (Actneg)
ACTING POSITIVE (Actpos)
COMMUNICATION (Infoshar)
LEADERSHIP (Dominc)

PEER NOMINATIONS

SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE
(Zsocacpt)

TEACHER RATINGS

PROSOCIAL (Kidplus)
MEAN/AGGRESSIVE
(Kidsmean)
AVOIDS OTHERS (Avoid)
DISLIKED (Kidnolik)

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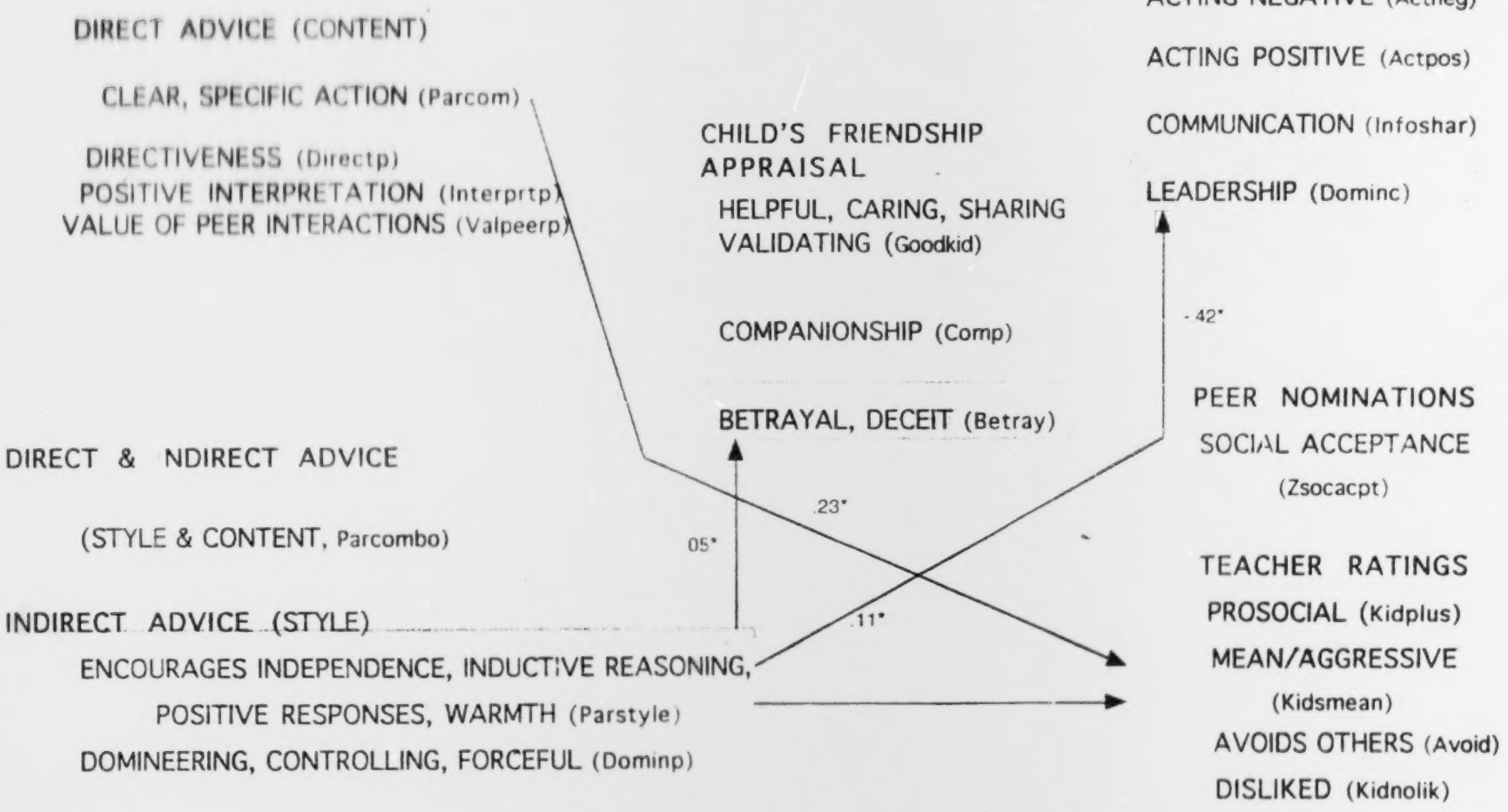
PARENTAL ADVICE-GIVING: INFLUENCES ON CHILDREN'S FRIENDSHIP OUTCOMES



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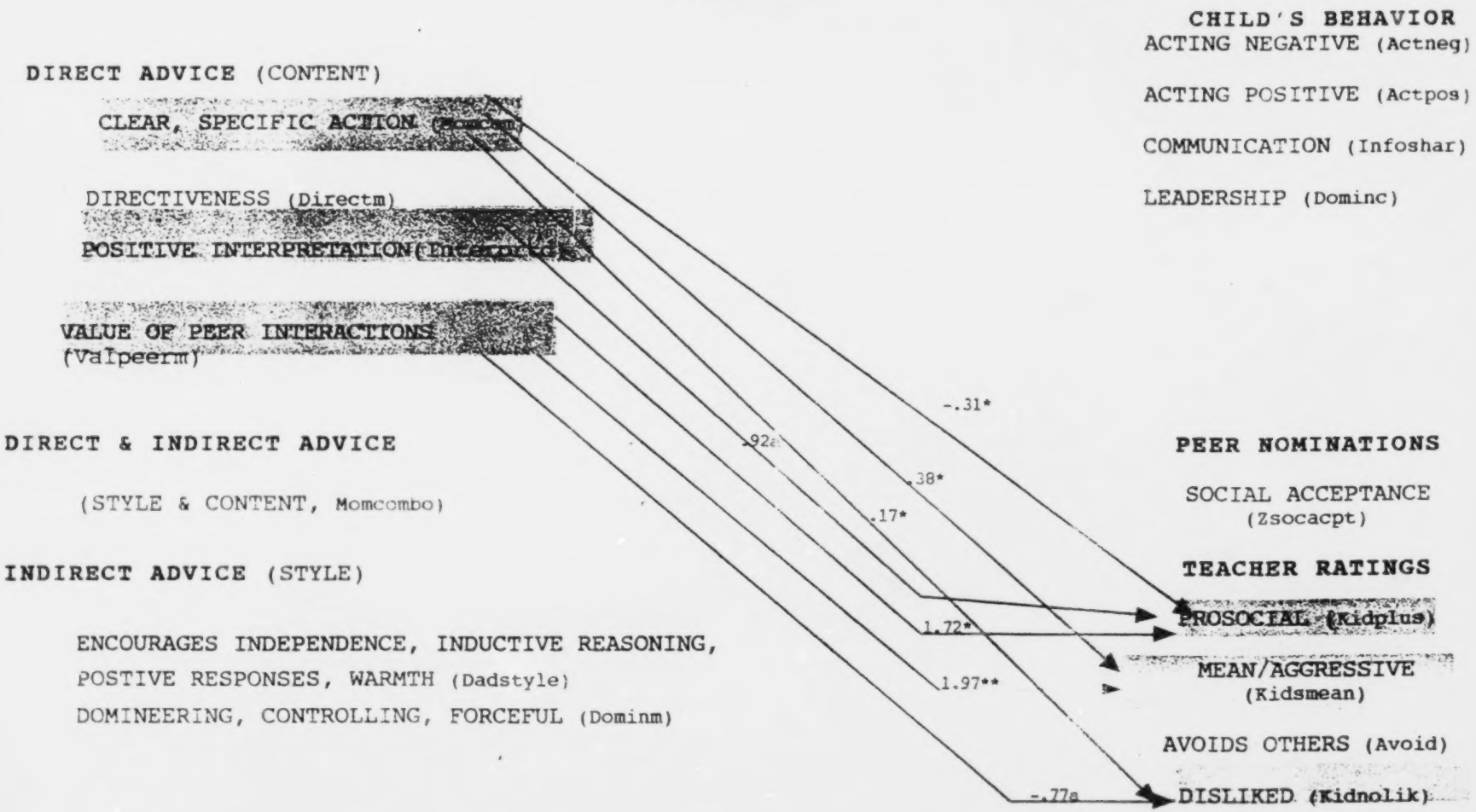

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MATERNAL ADVICE-GIVING: INFLUENCES ON CHILDREN'S FRIENDSHIP OUTCOMES

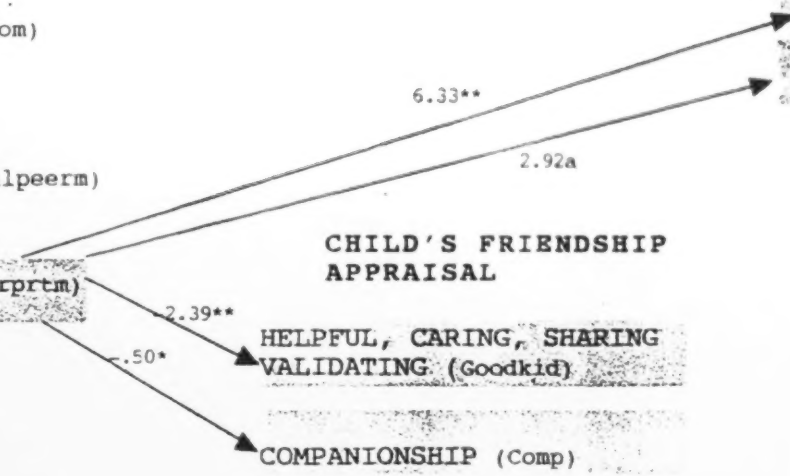
DIRECT ADVICE (CONTENT)

CLEAR, SPECIFIC ACTION (Momcom)

DIRECTIVENESS (Directm)

VALUE OF PEER INTERACTIONS (Valpeerm)

POSITIVE INTERPRETATION (Interprtm)



CHILD'S BEHAVIOR

ACTING NEGATIVE (Actneg)

ACTING POSITIVE (Actpos)

COMMUNICATION (Infoshar)

LEADERSHIP (Dominc)

CHILD'S FRIENDSHIP APPRAISAL

HELPFUL, CARING, SHARING VALIDATING (Goodkid)

COMPANIONSHIP (Comp)

BETRAYAL, DECEIT (Betray)

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(STYLE & CONTENT, Momcombo)

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ENCOURAGES INDEPENDENCE, INDUCTIVE REASONING, POSITIVE RESPONSES, WARMTH (Momstyle)

DOMINEERING, CONTROLLING, FORCEFUL (Dominm)

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DIRECT ADVICE (CONTENT)
CLEAR, SPECIFIC ACTION (Momcom)

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POSITIVE INTERPRETATION (Interprtm)

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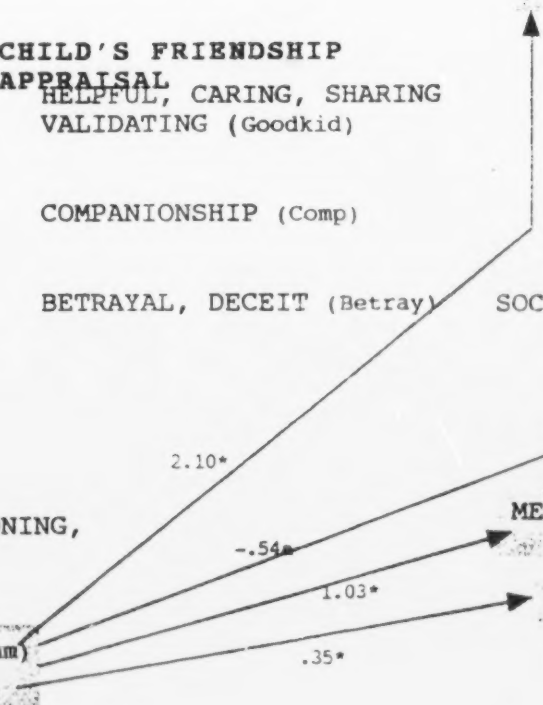
CHILD'S FRIENDSHIP APPRAISAL

HELPFUL, CARING, SHARING VALIDATING (Goodkid)

COMPANIONSHIP (Comp)

BETRAYAL, DECEIT (Betray)



CHILD'S BEHAVIOR

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COMMUNICATION (Infoshar)

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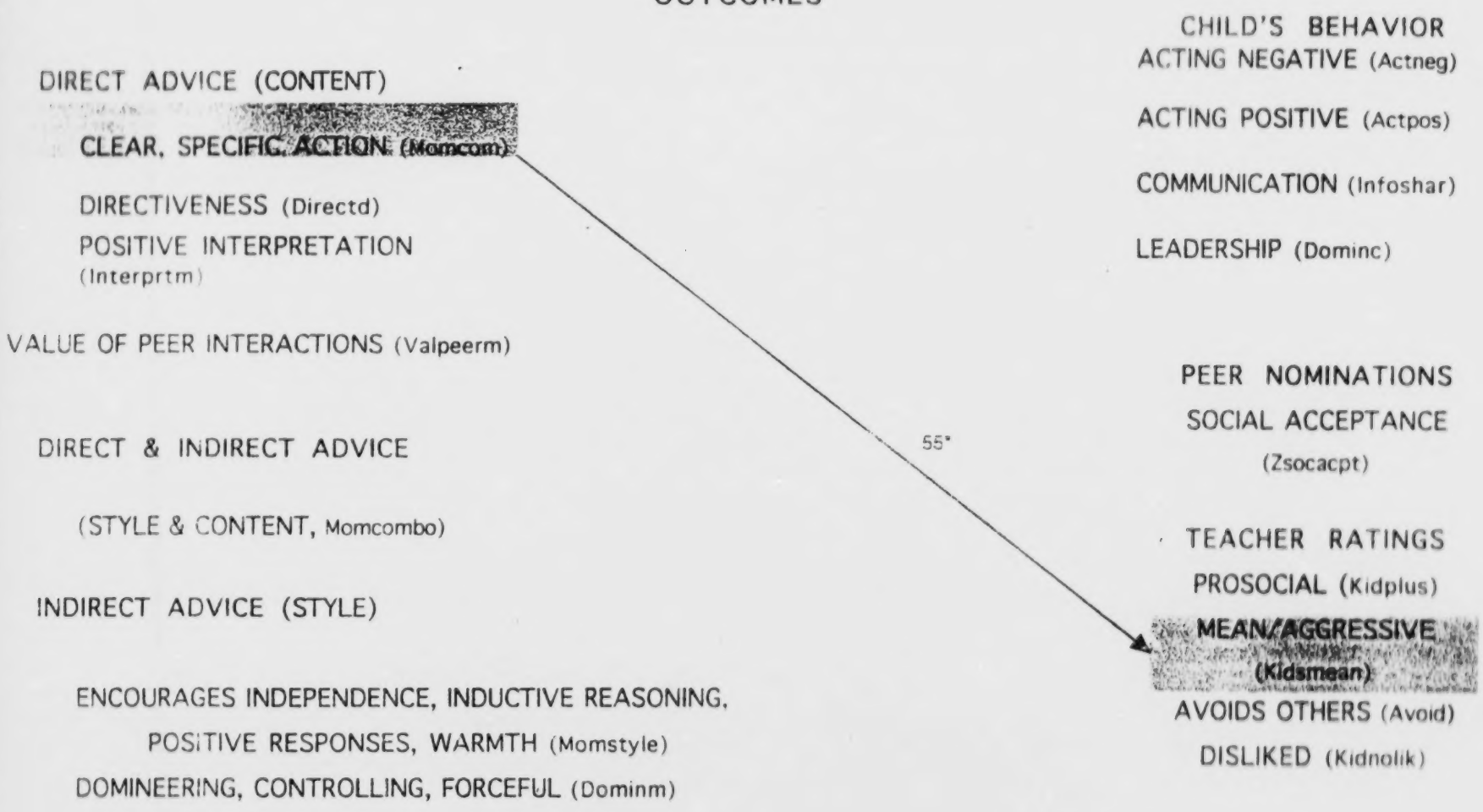

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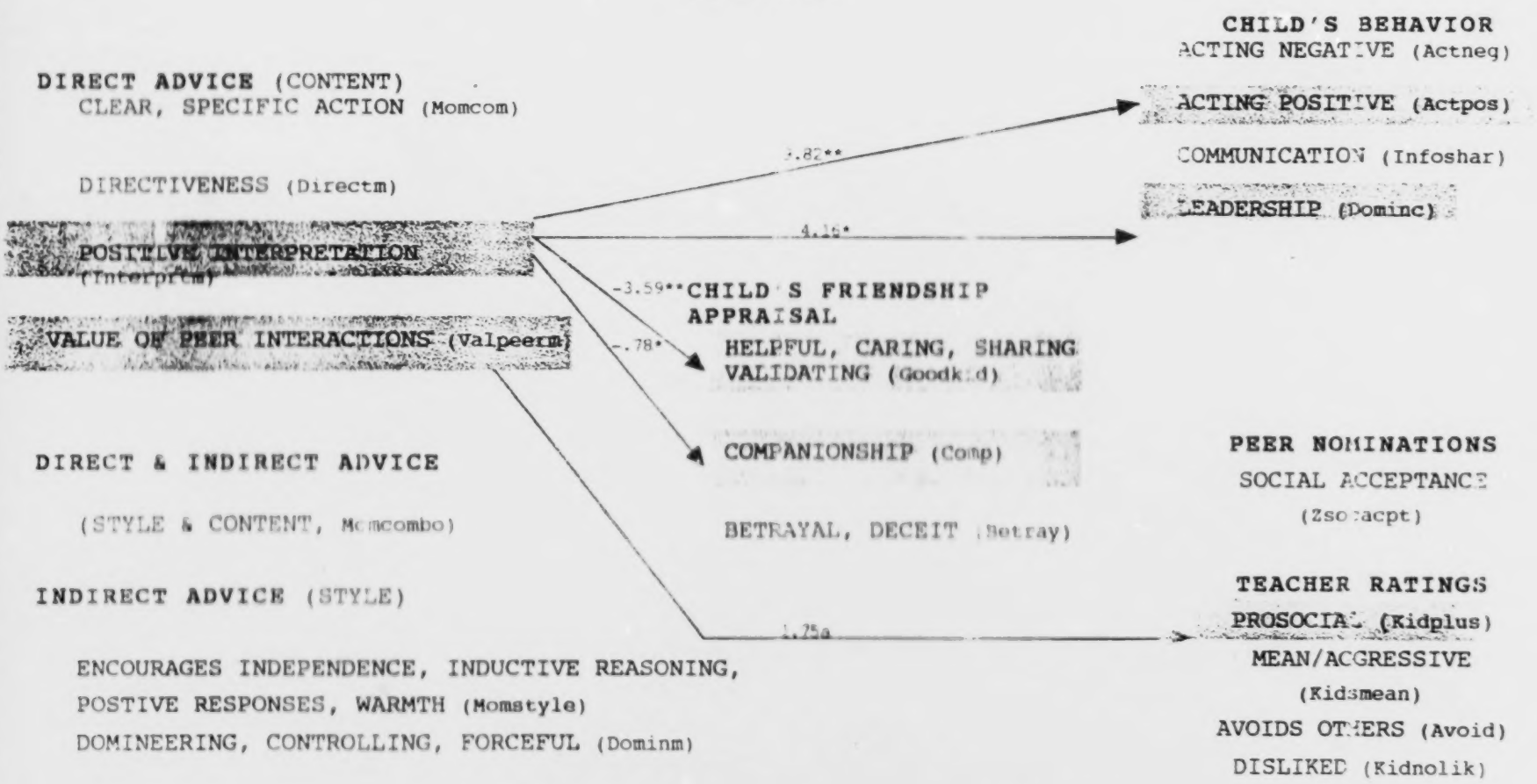

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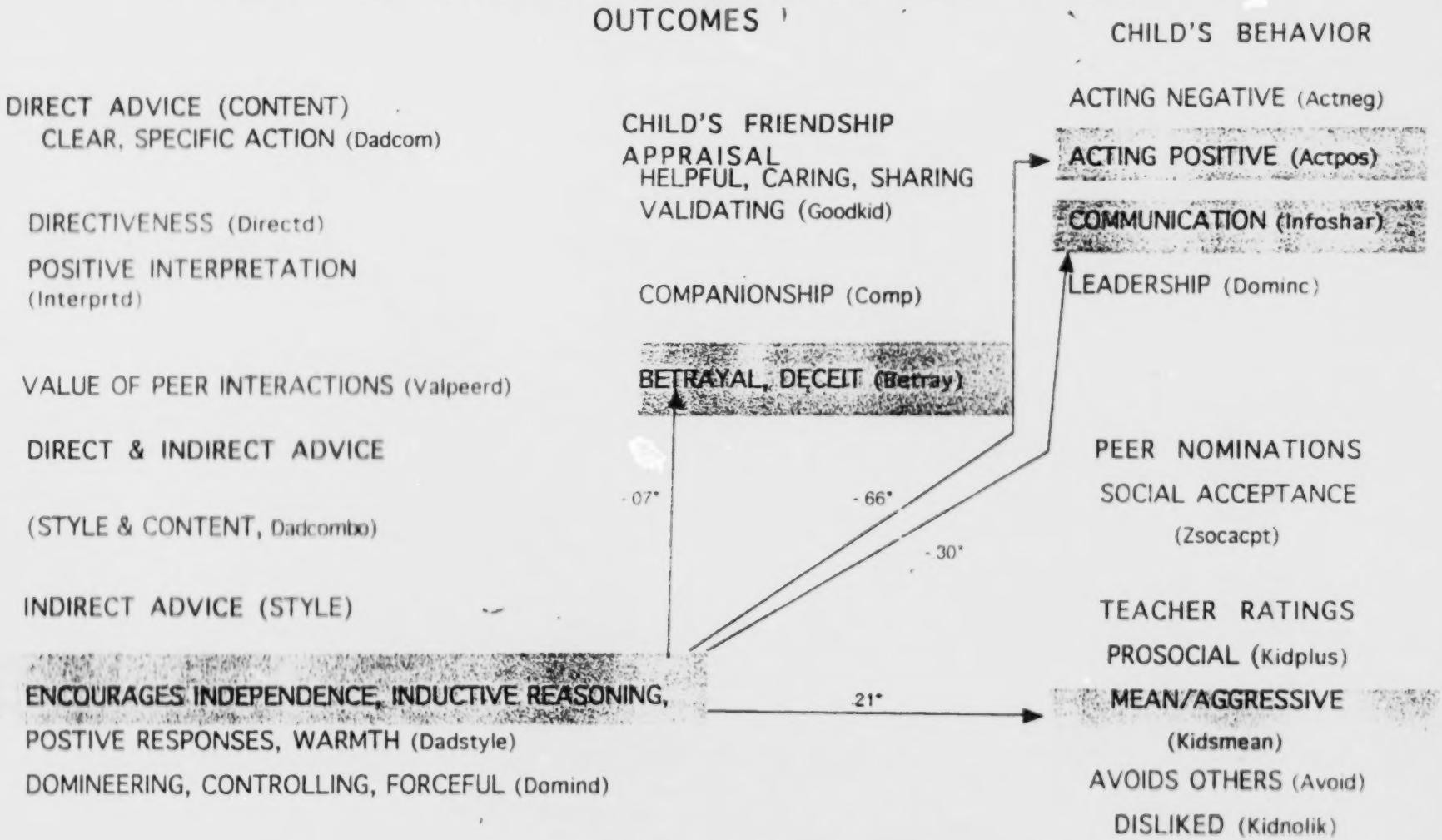

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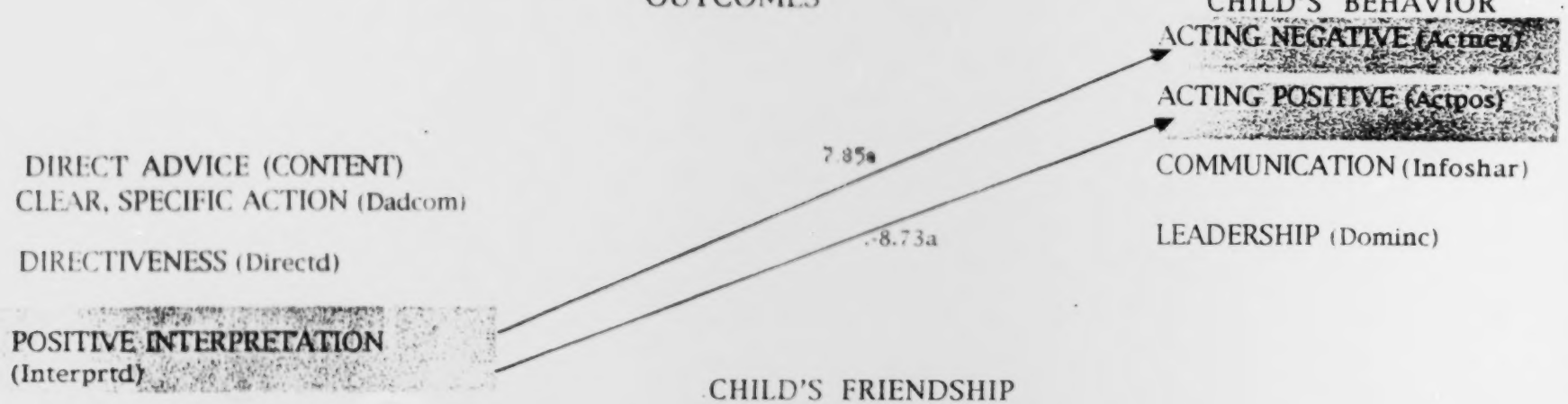

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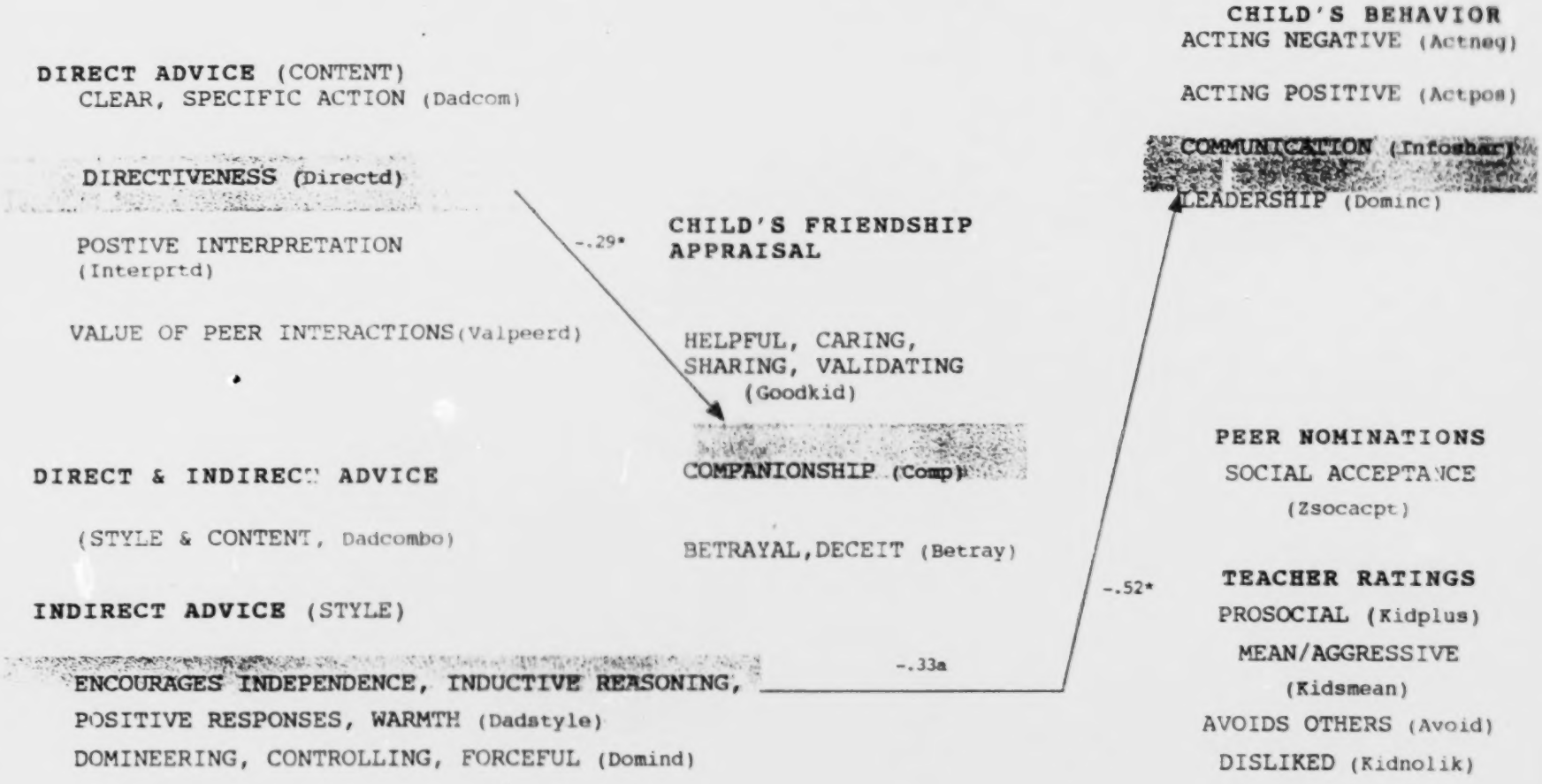

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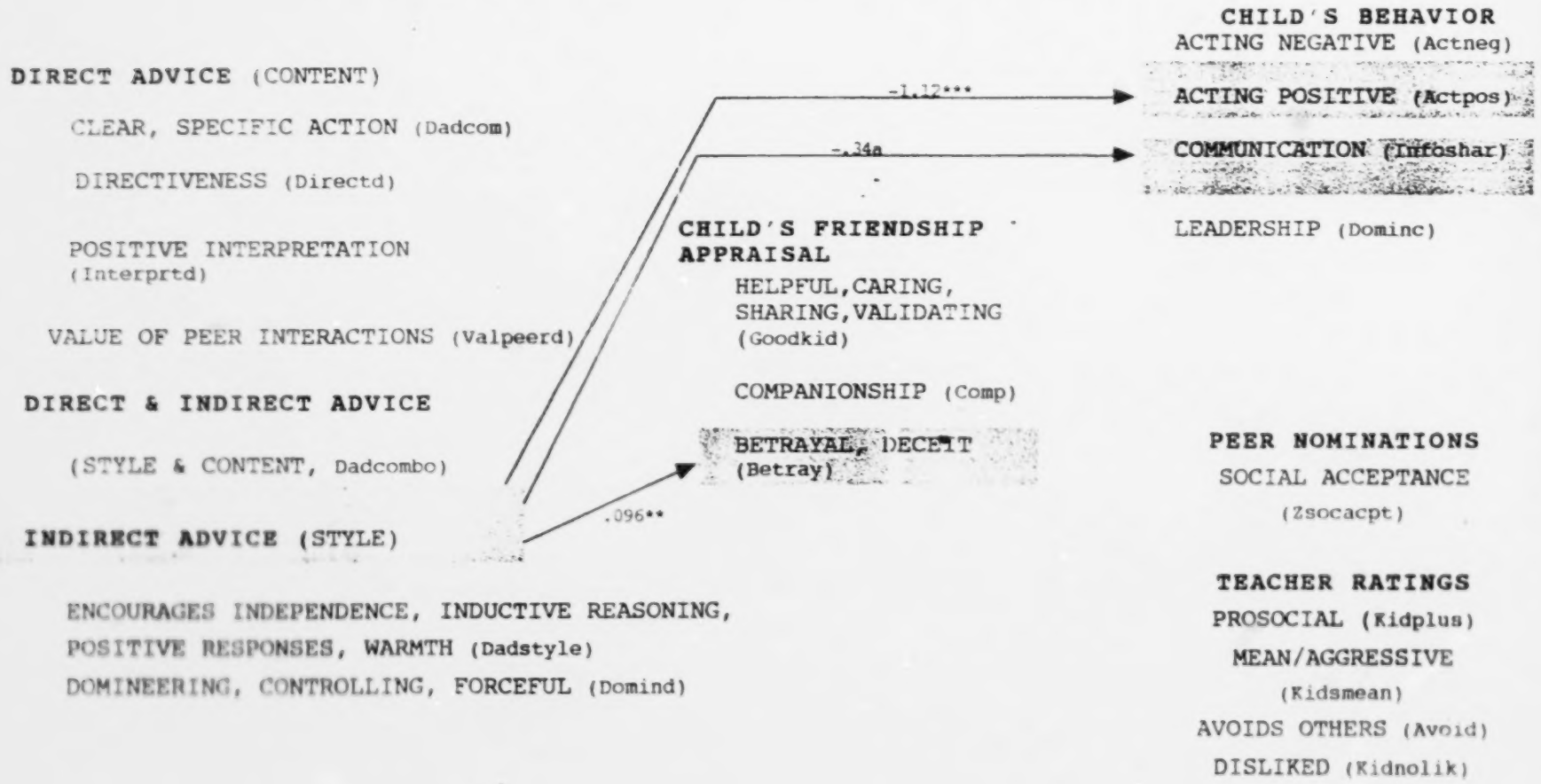

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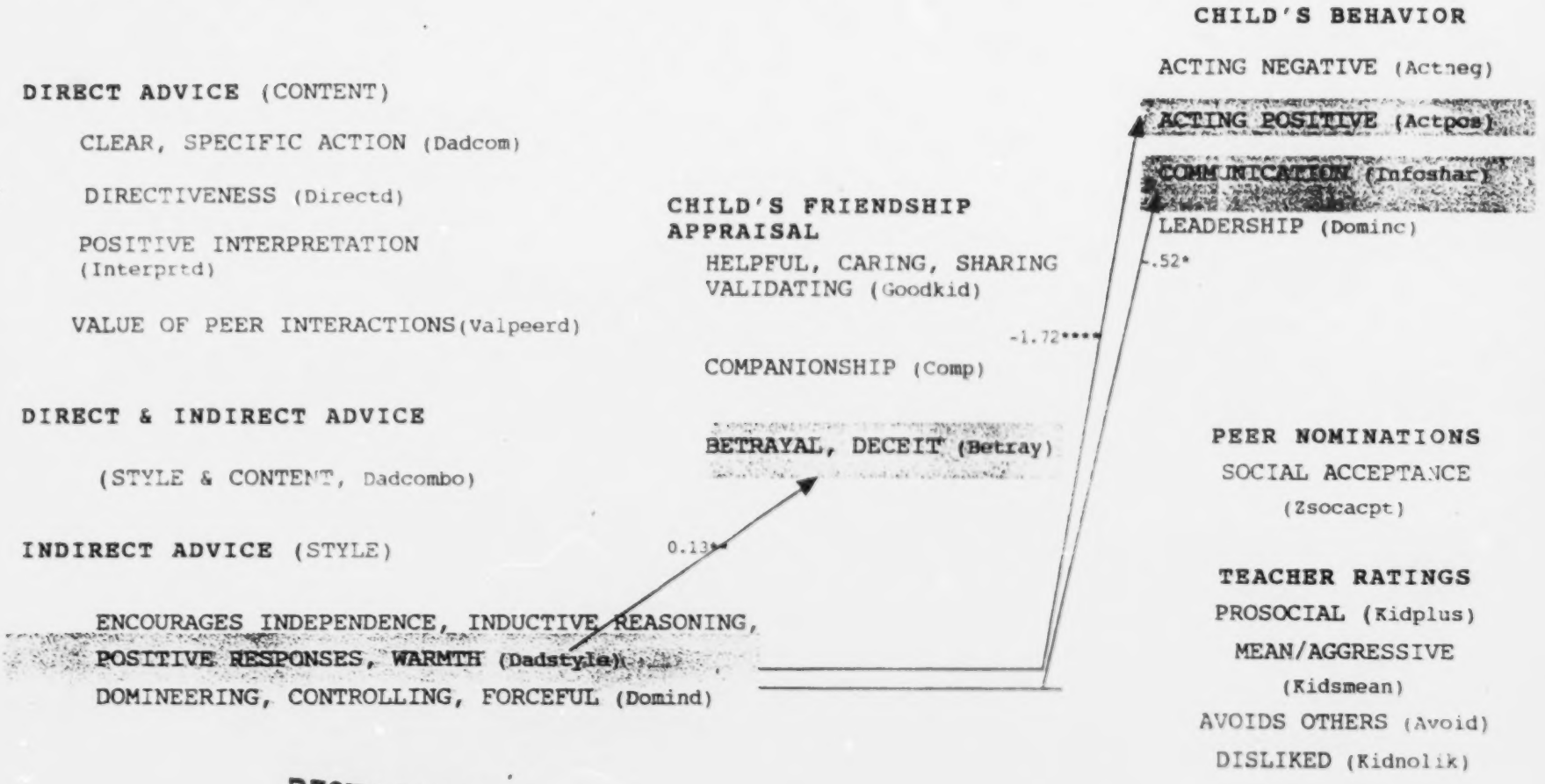

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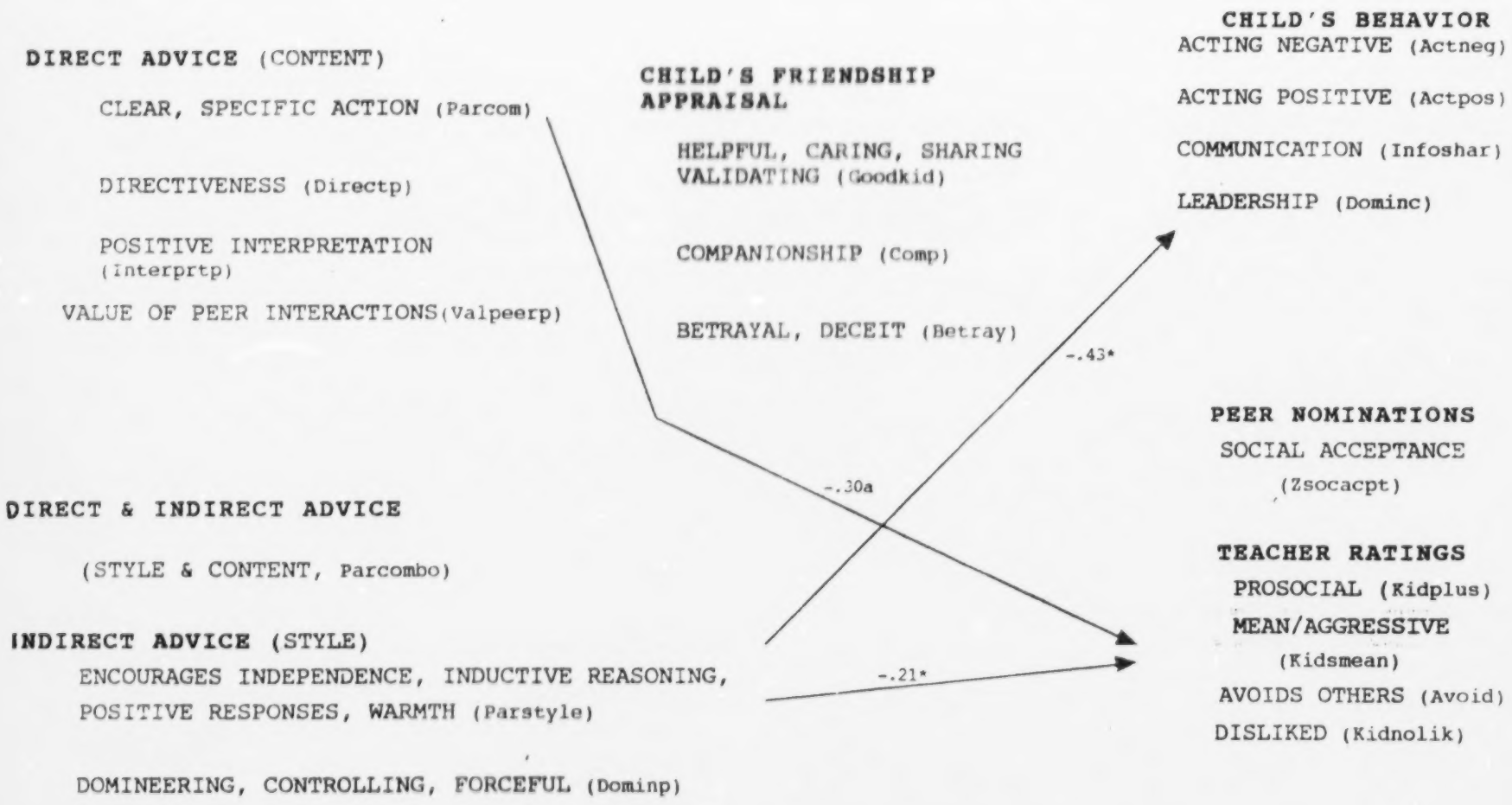
PARENTAL ADVICE-GIVING: INFLUENCES ON BOY'S FRIENDSHIP OUTCOMES



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